

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 19, 1858.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. CLAY made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany Bill S. 42.]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred "a bill to provide for the construction of a custom-house, court-house, and post office in Trenton, in the State of New Jersey," have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report :

That, in their opinion, it is inexpedient to make an appropriation for a custom-house at that place. They also, herewith, present a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury as part of their report, (A.)

That part of the bill providing for a court-house and post office to be erected at the above place, not coming appropriately before them for action, is hereby reported back to the Senate for reference to the appropriate committees.

A.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
January 26, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st instant, enclosing a bill "to provide for the construction of a custom-house, court-house, and post office, in Trenton, in the State of New Jersey," and requesting any information that the department may have in its possession, and with its views in respect to the same.

In reply, I have to say that Trenton is neither a port of entry nor delivery, and that there are no facts before the department which would justify its recommending it as a port of *entry*; and, therefore, no custom-house is needed.

In the matter of the construction of a court-house and post office, this department can give no opinion, such subjects belonging to the Interior and Post Office Department, respectively.

The bill is herewith returned.

In view of the number of applications to Congress for erecting custom-houses, post offices, and other public buildings, I would respect-

fully call your attention to the recommendations of my annual report on the subject. Every day's experience impresses more strongly upon my mind the absolute necessity of adopting some system in relation to public buildings which will protect the government from improvident expenditures in this branch of business, as well as to secure equality and justice to different localities. Custom-houses, post offices, and court-houses, if built at all by the government, should be first erected at those points where the largest amount of business is transacted; and the system, conducted upon this principle, could be extended to other points, as far as the means of the government would authorize and justify it.

In the present condition of the finances of the government, I feel it to be my duty to urge upon Congress the propriety of refusing all applications of this character which are not absolutely demanded by the necessities of the public service; and as I am not aware of any such cases, I would suggest for your consideration that the present is an inauspicious moment for the inauguration of a system of public expenditure, which would for a series of years constitute a heavy draft upon the treasury. In my annual report I expressed my opposition to the recent policy of erecting public buildings, and I desire now to add the additional consideration, growing out of our financial embarrassments, as a conclusive reason for not favoring such a policy at this time.

These views are presented in this letter, not on account of their peculiar application to this particular case, but for the purpose of calling your attention to the subject generally.

I am, very respectfully,

HOWELL COBB,
Secretary of the Treasury.

Hon. C. C. CLAY, Jr.,
*Chairman Committee on Commerce,
United States Senate.*